# Abhinavagupta

## And The Śaiva Renaissance



JAWAHAR LAL KAUL

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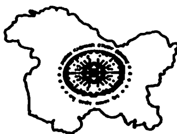
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*by*
Jawahar Lal Kaul

*Translated by*
Dileep Kumar Kaul



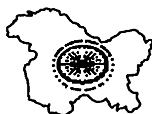
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## PREFACE

In the intellectual tradition of India, Ācārya Abhinavagupta as an unparalleled genius and the land of Kashmir as his place of dwelling form a unique, sacred conflation. As Kashmir has been the center of all knowledge, Ācārya Abhinavagupta is the greatest unified exponent many forms of knowledge and spiritual meditative practices. Kashmir has not only been the seat of Śaivism, but has also been the meeting point of Buddhist, *Mīmāṁsā*, *Nyāya*, *Siddha*, Tantric, *Sūfī* and many other traditions. Besides being the representative master of non-dualistic *Āgama* and *Pratyabhijñā* philosophies, Ācārya Abhinavagupta holds within him the sum total of more than one forms of knowledge.

If the intellectual and philosophical traditions of India have any complexities anywhere with some propositions and principles hampering the emergence of a conclusion, and Ācārya Abhinavagupta takes up any such controversial subject and gives his point of view, the complexities and controversies are immediately got over and an acceptable conclusion is available. Such magic of Ācārya Abhinavagupta's touch can be seen in his explanation of the *Rasasūtra,* the basic aphorism of Bharata's *theory of Rasa.* Ācāraya Abinavagupta termed his explanations of the aphorism as *Abhivyaktivāda* which if translated literally means expressionism. By this Abhinavagupta meant that the emotions inherent in a man called *Sthāyī Bhāvas* are

expressed to give rise to a particular *Rasa.* Several currents of Indian intellect and spirituality are conjoined in the grand persona of Ācārya Abhinavagupta from whose being they are carried forward in a powerful holistic current.

Atrigupta (8th Century), an ancestor of Ācārya Abhinavagupta lived in Kannauj province (then a kingdom, now located North-West of Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh). King Yaśovarmana was the ruler then. Atrigupta was a scholar of many *Śāstras,* especially *Śaivaśasanas.* In 740 AD when Lalitāditya conquered Kannauj and annexed it to Kashmir, he requested Atrigupta to come to Kashmir and live there. On the banks of river *Vitastā* (Jhelum), near the temple of *Lord Sītānśumauli* (Śiva), a grand residence was built for Atrigupta. In this glorious family of Atrigupta, Abhinavagupta was born after 200 years. His father's name was Narasiṁhagupta. In his works Abhinavagupta refers to his mother Vimalā with special reverence calling her Vimalakalā.

An *Avatāra* is a manifestation of a deity who comes on this earth with a specific purpose. Like Patañjali, the great grammarian and the creator of *Yogasūtras,* Ācarya Abhinavagupta, too, is considered an *avatāra* of Śeṣanāga. Śeṣanāga is the protector of knowledge and culture. Ācarya Jayaratha, the commentator of Abhinavagupta's work, *Tantrāloka* refers to him as *Yoginībhū* which is the name given to the child born of a woman who has reached a high mystical level. In fact, both man and woman must be pure, have no other desire than the divine desire, grace should pervade their whole body so that a *Yoginībhū* is born to them. Abhinavagupta is said to be conceived by parents who were both absorbed in *Samādhi.* In this way Abhinavagupta is a manifestation of Śiva.

Ācārya Abhinavagupta studied various knowledge-forms with the greatest teachers and masters of his time. His father Narasiṁhagupta taught him grammar. Lakṣmaṇagupta taught him *Pratyabhijñāśāstra* and Śambhunātha *(Jallandharapīṭha)* initiated him into the meditative practices of the *Kaula Sect.* In his works Abhinavagupta has mentioned his nine teachers with utmost reverence. In India, it is rare to

find such a fusion of various knowledge forms in a single master. Same is the case with Kashmir, the abode of mother goddess *Śaradā*. No other place in India has produced so many masters as Kashmir.

Ācārya Abhinavagupta achieved glory with the great masters he learnt with and continuing the tradition continued the glorious tradition through his worthy disciples whose competence is unquestionable. Among his outstanding disciples are Kṣemarāja, Kṣemendra and Madhurājayogī. This tradition continues through *ācāryas* like Subhaṭadatta (12th Century), Jayaratha, Śobhākaragupta, Maheśvarānanda (12th Century), Bhāskarakaṇṭha (18th Century) and to Swami Lakshman Joo. Unfortunately, some historical occurrences pushed to the margins the vast and invaluable amount of knowledge that emanated from these masters. This was not only because of the happenings in Kashmir.

In 14th century, an *Advaita Vedānta* thinker Ācārya Sāyaṇa Mādhava (Mādhavācārya), in his famous work *Sarvadarśanasaṅgraha* evaluated the sixteen philosophical traditions from the point of view of *Śāṅkara Vedānta*. The modern university methodology reduces the Indian philosophy to just the six traditions and explains them as a conflict between the theistic and the atheistic philosophies. *Āgama* based philosophies such as *Śaiva, Śākta, Pāñcarātra* etc, have been forgotten. Today, leaving aside some *Kashmiri Pandit* families, the Kashmiris do not know even the name of Abhinavagupta. In modern times Abhinavgupta and Kashmiri Śaiva philosophy is taught all over the world but India, and in Kashmir University, the centre of knowledge in Abhinavagupta's birth place, there is nobody to take care of his achievements. Without understanding the contribution of Kashmiri masters, the study of the Indian intellectual tradition will be incomplete and confusing. The apathy towards Kashmir and the tradition of intellect and knowledge it has produced is detrimental to the very idea of India.

Ācārya Abhinavagupta dedicated his long life to three things— dedication towards Śiva, authoring books and

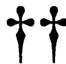
teaching. The books he authored are said to be 42 in number out of which only 20-22 are available. In his works there are references of more than hundred scriptural works which are now extinct. The manuscripts of Abhinavgupta's works have been found in south India, especially Kerala. His works were taught with reverence in whole of ancient India. At the age of 70 years, when he left for his final journey, he had ten thousand disciples in Kashmir. He entered the *Bhairava Cave,* situated on the Srinagar-Gulmarg road, and left for the final abode along with his body. That cave remains neglected and is not a protected monument. The *Mahādeva* mountains of Kashmir, on the peaks of which, lord *Shiva* himself gave to us the *Āgama* scriptures, those snow clad mountains still demand *Pratyabhijñā,* the recognition of their divinity from the whole country. *Pratyabhijñā* means shedding off the covers of ignorance and knowing the self, the feeling of *Sivoham*—I am the Śiva. Kashmir is the sacred land of *Trika* or *Pratyabhijñā* philosophy. In a way, this *Pratyabhijñā* must be the most relevant philosophy of life of our country. The significance of the name *Bharata* is not possible without the *Pratyabhijñā,* the divine consciousness of our powers. This divine consciousness of our powers is indispensable to understand the contemporary situation of our country and decide the future course of action.

This booklet is an attempt to present the facts related to Ācārya Abhinavgupta in a simple language so that a common Indian can easily understand. In this endeavor Dr. Rajneesh Mishra of Jawaharlal Nehru University has been a great help for which thanks is a very small word. My gratitude is due to many other friends without whom this work would not have been possible.

**Jawahar Lal Kaul**

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# Diacritical marks for Roman Transliteration of Devanagari script

## Vowels

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Short :** | अ | इ | उ | ऋ | ऌ | | | | |
| | a | i | u | ṛ | ḷ | | | | |
| **Long :** | आ | ई | ऊ | ए | ऐ | ओ | औ | ॠ | ॡ |
| | ā | ī | ū | e | ai | o | au | ṝ | ḹ |

**Anusvara :** ं = ṁ ँ = m̐

**Visarga :** ः = ḥ

**Non-aspirant :** ऽ = ’

## Consonants

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Classified :** | क् | ख् | ग् | घ् | ङ् | | | |
| | k | kh | g | gh | ṅ | | | |
| | च् | छ् | ज् | झ् | ञ् | | | |
| | c | ch | j | jh | ñ | | | |
| | ट् | ठ् | ड् | ढ् | ण् | | | |
| | ṭ | ṭh | ḍ | ḍh | ṇ | | | |
| | त् | थ् | द् | ध् | न् | | | |
| | t | th | d | dh | n | | | |
| | प् | फ् | ब् | भ् | म् | | | |
| | p | ph | b | bh | m | | | |
| **Un-classified** | य् | र् | ल् | व् | श् | ष् | स् | ह् |
| | y | r | l | v | ś | ṣ | s | h |
| **Compound :** | क्ष् | त्र् | ज्ञ् | | | | | |
| | kṣ | tr | jñ | | | | | |

# Ācārya Abhinavagupta
## (A sketch by Madhurāja Yogin, a south Indian disciple of Ācārya Abhinavagupta)

ne who emits divine radiance, Abhinavagupta, who himself is Śiva incarnate, the *Dakṣiṇāmūrti,* lord Śiva facing south sitting on Mount Kailash instructing the Yogis; May he protect us. It is because of his compassion that he has taken a new body and manifested himself on the land of Kashmir. He is seated in a beautiful pavilion, set with jewels and decorated with beautiful works of art, situated in the middle of a small garden of golden grapes. In this pavilion the fragrance of flowers, incense sticks and lamps is spread everywhere. The walls of the pavilion are smeared with sandal-paste. There is music and dance everywhere. The pavilion is full of *yoginis* (female ascetics), learned scholars and saints with amazing powers. The seat is set with jewels and gold and covered with moonlight. Some disciples of Abhinavagupta are sitting in front of him, who are eager to write down every word he utters. Of all these Kṣemarāja is the most prominent. Abinavagupta is in a state of spiritual bliss, and the pupils of his eyes are dancing with divine delight. The middle of his forehead is dotted with sacred ash. A rosary bead is hanging with his one ear and his long beautiful hair are tied up backwards with a string of flowers.

His beard is long and the skin is golden. Shiny herbal ash applied to his neck makes it look black. From this neck his *Upavīta,* the sacred thread is hanging down. Clad in robes as white as the moonshine, he is sitting in the yogic posture called *vīramudrā.* His one hand is on his knee, and is holding string of beads in a position signifying his feeling of ultimate consciousness. The fingers of his other lotus-hand are playing on the strings of his *Veena,* giving rise to a sweet divine music.





# 1.

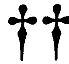
## The Mānasaputras of the sage Durvāsā

There is a popular fable regarding the Śaiva renaissance in Kashmir. In *Kaliyuga, Śaiva* philosophy had vanished and hardly any scholar of the *Āgama* scriptures was available. Knowledge, ethics, philosophy etc. were not being held in any esteem and a dark age had set in. Lord Śiva thought that now was the time to reestablish this knowledge way of thinking in the world to dispel the darkness that could overwhelm the mankind. So the lord manifested as Śrīkaṇṭha on mount Kailash and entrusted sage Durvāsā with the job of taking the Śaiva message to every corner. Durvāsā through his yogic powers gave birth to three *Mānasaputras* (the sons of mind). The sage gave them the knowledge of *Śivasūtra* and ordered them to reestablish the *Śaiva* philosophy in India. The three were directed to three dimensions of the philosophy—*Bheda, Abheda and Bhedābheda.*

*Bheda* is the concept of the soul being separate, which is also known as *Dvaitavāda* or dualism. *Abheda* means oneness of Śiva, the ultimate power and the soul. The soul is a form of Śiva and dwells within him always. *Bhedābheda* is the concept where Śiva and the soul considered sometimes as one and sometimes as separated. Sage Durvāsā initiated, Trayambaka, one of his *Mānasaputras* into *Abheda,* the second one Amardaka was initiated into *Bheda* and the *Bhedābheda* dimension was entrusted to Śrīnātha. These

three are the basic elements of the Śaiva philosophy. It was the concept of *Abheda* that with the passage of time was known as the *Trika* philosophy. These three disciples, too, passed on the knowledge to their *Mānasaputras* and the tradition continued for fifteen generations.

But in the fifteenth generation a *Mānasaputra* broke the rule and married a Brahmin girl. They had a son named Saṅgamāditya. Though Saṅgamāditya was born out of a mother's womb, after breaking a sacred rule of fifteen generations, yet he did not give up his basic responsibility of preaching the *Śaiva philosophy.* Despite that, it would not have been possible for him to remain in the system, which Durvāsā had fixed for the *Mānasaputras.* Like a wandering ascetic, he went on visiting the centres of Śaiva knowledge. In the course of his journeys he reached the *Land of Śaradā,* that is Kashmir. He found this land more suitable for the pursuit of knowledge as meditative practices could be carried on without any hindrance. Aruṇāditya, the son of Saṅgamāditya and his grandson Ānanda, too, continued the study of the *Śaiva* Philosophy, in their ancestral *Āśrama*, till Ānanda's son Somānanda grew up into an extremely talented youth. Vasugupta, the author of *Śivasūtras,* noticed his genius and their union proved to be historical for the Kashmiri Śaiva philosophy.



# 2.

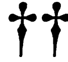
## The Śivasūtras

The credit of reestablishing the Śaiva philosophy in Kashmir goes to Vasugupta. There is a fable associated with him as well. He was a genius of such a caliber that lord Śiva himself gave him the knowledge of *Śivasūtras.* One night, Vasugupta saw Lord Śiva in a dream, who ordered him to enlighten the world with the real knowledge as the time was ripe for it. The lord instructed him to go to Mount Mahādeva, remove a specific rock, under which he could find the divine knowledge.

In the morning Vasugupta went to the spot. He searched for the rock and found it after some time. It was beside a small stream. Vasugupta just touched it and it moved aside, revealing the great work, created by Lord Śiva himself. These were the *Śivasūtras.* Vasuguptga internalized the knowledge and forwarded it to some of his disciples as well. The knowledge was so occult and abstract that it was to be given to those disciples only who had attained the spiritual stature to deserve it. With this began the new era of the Śaiva philosophy in Kashmir.

Vasugupta is known as the creator of *Spandaśāstra,* an important principle of the Śaiva philosophy, but the contribution of his disciple Somānanda towards the philosophy has its own significance. Besides *Śivadṛṣṭi* he wrote *Īśvara Pratyabhijña Sūtra*, a detailed commentary of which was written by Abhinavgupta afterwards. Many disciples of

Vasugupta gave detailed explanations of their teacher's principles. Among such disciples Somānanda, Kallaṭa Bhaṭṭa and Utpaladeva are the most famous.



# 3.

## Lalitāditya and Atrigupta

An incident that occurred not much before Saṅgamāditya came to Kashmir needs mention in this context. Great King of Kashmir Lalitāḍitya Muktāpīḍa had left Kashmir to expand his territories he reached Kannauj where he defeated the ruler. Accepting the defeat, the ruler gifted Lalitāditya with money and gold but there was a peculiar demand from the victor King. He wanted some scholars of Kannauj with him. Among them was a Śaiva scholar of the Kannauj court who went to Kashmir with Lalitāditya.

This Śaiva scholar Atrigupta lived in *Antarvedī,* an area between the rivers Ganga and Yamuna, and his scholarship had earned him such reputation that ensured him a place in the court of the king. It was a peculiar coincidence that King Lalitāditya who was an ardent devotee of Lord Viṣṇu brought with him, a Śaiva scholar. But after some decades this coincidence turned into a revolutionary occurrence in the philosophical history of Kashmir. On the banks of river *Vitastā,* near the temple of lord *Śītānśumauli,* in the city of *Śrīnagarī* which emulated *Alakāpurī,* the beautiful and luxurious dwelling place of the deity of wealth Kubera, King Lalitāditya got constructed a grand building for Atrigupta and granted him some land as well to run his *Aśrama* where he could teach his pupils.

Many generations of Atrigupta and *Saṅgamāditya,*

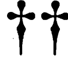
had been not only studying the principles of Shaivism in Kashmir but some of their descendants were very thorough in the fields of arts, grammar, drama, the theory of *Rasa* and music, the legacy of which came with all the associated benefits to Abhinavagupta. The disciples of both masters became extraordinary scholars. Somānanda The great-grandson of Saṅgamāditya and in the progeny of Atrigupta, after many generations Abhinavagupta as the unparalleled descendant, became the frontline scholars to establish *Śaiva*-philosophy in a novel form. Abhinavgupta's mother Vimalā, referred to with reverence as Vimalakalā by him, passed away when he was a child. But it is said that she was herself a spiritually elevated *Yoginī.* That is why Abhinavagupta is known as *Yoginībhū.* In his childhood Abhinavgupta did not attend any education center as his own family had great scholars in it. His father taught him Sanskrit Grammar and logic and his uncle Vāmanagupta taught him poetics.

In his youth he felt the need of a spiritual mentor. To understand many points of view and traditions of Shaivism, a *Guru* thoroughly trained in the traditions of Śaiva scholars was necessary. His first *guru* was Lakṣmaṇagupta, but Abhinavgupta's thirst for knowledge was such that one *guru* was not enough.

He believed that you may get an all-knowing *guru* but to understand other points of view and forms of knowledge other *gurus* are indispensable. It is said that he had nineteen *gurus* out of which Ācārya Śambhunatha was from Jallandhar, from whom he got the Knowledge of *Kaula* philosophy. Abhinavagupta used to say, "Like a bee suck the nectar from many flowers and through your own attempt make the honey." Though marriage is not prohibited for a Śaiva meditator yet Abhinavagupta never married.

Armed with essential knowledge of language, grammar, logic and styles of communication he felt th need of deeper understanding of philosophy of his choice. By this time Abhinavagupta had already studied the available books on not only *Śaiva* philosophy but also other philosophical theories as well. He was well versed in Vedic lore also.

Abhinavagupta had not just read about Vasugupta, but had studied his concepts thoroughly. He, in fact, was himself in the tradition of disciples of Vasugupta, whose disciples had branched into two lineages. His outstanding disciple Kallaṭa Bhaṭṭa had a pupil named Pradyumna Bhaṭṭa. Pragñārāja was the son of Pradyumna who became his disciple. This lineage of disciple ran from Pragñārāja till Bhāskara and went even beyond Abhinavagupta. Another lineage began with Somānanda. The famous Śaiva scholar Utpalācārya was Somānanda's disciple. His son Lakṣmaṇagupta became his disciple and later on became the basic *Guru* of Abhinavagupta.



# 4.

## Renunciation is not necessary

To understand the philosophical world of Abhinavagupta we need to go through the very long tradition of Kashmir Shaivism. The basic points of his world view can only be understood when we understand the preceding era of this unparalleled genius. This was the golden period of Language, Arts and Philosophy in Kashmir. In the eighth century if we take Vasugupta as the first serious Śaiva thinker, then Abhinavagupta stands at the highest point of that era. The time span of one hundred and fifty years between Vasugupta and Abhinavagupta was an era which saw the development of various dimensions of Shaivism and the interpretation of its various philosophical tenets.

When Abhinavagupta attempted to measure the depths of *Śaiva* philosophy, he knew that this philosophy was being seen from three points of view— *Bheda, Abheda* and *Bhedābheda.* He chose his path from the very beginning. For him Śiva permeated the entire creation. He permeates even *Māyā* which is considered a hindrance. His study revealed to him, four traditions in this direction, but after a prolonged contemplation he felt that these four are not different philosophies but four essential dimensions of one colossal philosophy. These four dimensions are— *Krama* tradition, *Kula* tradition, *Spanda* tradition and *Pratyabhijñā* tradition. These demanded a serious and committed study.

Understanding Vasugupta's critical appreciation of *Spanda* tradition was not difficult for him as from the long tradition of Vasugupta's disciples many *Ācāryas* were alive or their works were available. One of the masters of the *Krama* tradition was Airakanātha, who makes it clear that the devotee must emerge from the personal energy and be a part of the universal energy. Abhinavagupta has paid special attention to *Pratyabhijñā,* but the knowledge of its basic elements were available in the works of Vasugupta's disciple Somānanda, in whose tradition of disciples were Utpaladeva and Lakṣmaṇagupta, who too, contributed towards the development of this aspect of the philosophy. It has been already said that Lakṣmaṇagupta was Abhinavagupta's first *guru.*

It was only *Kula* tradition over which Abhinavagupta had to spend time and effort. Perhaps no works of the originator of this tradition, Sumatinātha, were available or if any were available at all those were so abridged that Abhinavagupta did not feel satisfied. One of the reasons could be that the *Kula* tradition is a Tantric tradition and it was impossible to internalise it by mere reading or listening. So the first-hand experience of, may have been necessary for him to give a solid foundation to his philosophy. Anyway, it is clear that no accomplished masters of the *Kula* tradition were available in Kashmir at that time. This compelled Abhinavagupta to go to Jallandhar to train under Śambhunātha, the famous master of the Tantric *Kaula* tradition.

It appears that in the beginning Abhinavagupta's disciples were his nearest relatives. One of his relative Mandara, took him out of Parihāsapura, to a town where his aunt Vātsalyakā lived. In her house special care was taken that nobody disturbs him and he wrote his famous work *Tantrāloka.* Among his first disciples was his own brother Manoratha. His sister Ambā and her husband Karaṇa, too, had come to him to learn the Śaiva-philosophy, but unfortunately Karaṇa passed away soon after. Karaṇa's father was a minister of the king of that time, but he gave up the post

and took the path of Śaiva meditation. Among his other disciples were his maternal uncle Utpala's sons Cakrāra, Pañcagupta and Kṣhema.

After he became an *Ācārya,* a master, Abhinavagupta is referred to as Abhinavaguptapāda. This name has been explained in several ways. This epithet has been used for the snake god Śeṣanāga. Some people say that this epithet was used because Abhinavagupta was like a snake for his contemporary masters. But there is nothing peculiar about the use of the epithet *pāda* with great masters. It seems to be an honourable expression. So such assumptions appear baseless. Another view is that his original name would have been different and this name may have been given after he became a Śaiva master. But in his *Tantrāloka* he has written that 'this work is the creation of Abhinavagupta, the name has been given to him by his *Gurujanas.*' *Gurujanas* or teachers could be ancestors or parents as well. After Atrigupta the members of his family continued to study not only the different aspects of Shaivism, but the different members of his extended family were interested in different subjects. Abhinavgupta's maternal uncle was a Śaiva master and his father a linguist. The range of experts in his very family extended from music, drama, criticism to aesthetics and different arts. It is difficult to ascertain whether his important disciple Kṣemarāja was his disciple or not. But Abhinavagupta while referring to his maternal cousins talks about Kṣemarāja with special affection.



# 5.

## Different sources of knowledge

Learning with all the Śaiva masters of the time was not sufficient. That was the era of *Vedānta*. Though Buddhists were leaving the most of their centers, yet in the valleys and foothills of Himalayas their influence was intact. So interactions with Buddhist and Vedantic masters were necessary. The influence of *Tantra,* if any, was due to Buddhists only. In the *Mahāyāna* sect and especially in its *Vajrayāna* branch Tantra held sway. It is said that Abhinavagupta had interactions with some Jain masters and some atheistic philosophers as well.

Abhinavagupta wrote about every aspect of Shaivism some of which is not available now. *Tantrāloka* is his most important work. *Parātriṁśikāvivaraṇa, Paramārthasāra, Tantrasāra* and *Gītārthasaṅgraha* are his other significant works. *Paramārthasāra* is based on the *Kārikā* of Śeṣa while as *Gītārthasaṅgraha* is his commentary on *Śrīmadbhagvadgītā.* His *Abhinava Bhāratī* was an analysis of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata Muni. This work along with a treatise on Ānandhavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka* makes Abhinavagupta much ahead of general Śaiva philosophers.

While commenting on the great works of old masters he takes care that the explanations are in tune with the society and time so that the people can connect with his comments. He has not denied the message and context of *Gītā* but expressed it symbolically. He says that one can get rid of all the

troubles if the *Parama Śiva* is seen manifestly. He sees no problem in addressing Śiva as Kṛṣṇa. For him, the war between Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas is the conflict between *Vidyā* (spiritual knowledge) and *Avidyā* (mundane knowledge). *Pratyabhijñā Vimarśa* is a very important work in the sense that it deals with his favorite subject *Pratyabhijñā*. In this work he explains how to interact with Śiva whom we have forgotten due to ignorance. In his last days his followers considered him the incarnation of Lord Bhairava.

It is said that when he turned seventy, Abhinavagupta, singing *Śiva-stuti* along with his many disciples, entered a cave in Beerwa village of district Badgam near Srinagar and became one with Śiva. This cave is still there in Kashmir.

After Abhinavagupta his principal disciple Kṣemarāja continued his tradition. Besides *Śivasūtravṛtti* and *Śivasūtravimarśiṇī* he wrote *Hṛdayaspandasandohā* and *Spandanirṇaya*. It is said that Kṣemarāja wrote a book on Lord Buddha as well in which his glory is explained. After Kṣemarāja his disciple Yogarāja wrote a commentary on Abhinavagupta's *Paramārthasāra*. After Kṣemarāja, Jayaratha was the most renowned Śaiva scholar. He wrote his commentary on *Tantrāloka*. Though the political environment was not conducive yet the tradition of Shiavite *Ācārayas* continued somehow.

Śivopādhyāya, the writer of *Vijñānabhairava Tantra* was the last Śaiva scholar of eighteenth century. The modern master who tied up the strings and took it to our time was Swami Lakshman Joo, his organization is still working to spread the *Śaiva* word.



# 6.

## The Nirvāṇa of Abhinavagupta

No independent sources are available to tell about the birth and *nirvāṇa* of Abhinavagupta. Whatever is available is based on what Abinavagupta has written himself or what his disciples have said. The *Bhairava Stotra,* singing which it is said, that he entered a cave along with his disciples contains a date— ***vasu-rasa Pauṣe Kṛṣṇa daśamyām...***which means the tenth day of the dark half of the lunar month of Pauṣa in 68th year of the calendar. It cannot be the *Vikarmi* calendar as it was not used in Kashmir at that time.

The traditional calendar of Kashmir has always been *Saptaṛṣi* that has been in vogue even before the Mahābhārata era. It has been used in Purāṇas and the *Rājataraṅginī* of Kalhaṇa. In this calendar the stars in the *Saptaṛṣi* (Ursa major) constellation take 2,700 years to complete one cycle through the 27 stars called *Nakṣatras*, that is one hundred years from one *Nakṣatra* to the other. So to complete one cycle 2,700 years are needed but to travel from one *Nakṣatra* to the other the *Saptaṛṣi* takes little more than 100 years. To compensate for this change in speed two years are added after every three hundred years, in the same way as one day is added to a leap year after every four years. So the cycle is completed in 2,718 years. As the *Saptaṛṣi* calendar runs for a very long period the common people just use the last two numbers in the same way as we refer to the first war of Indian independence as the

rebellion of 57 when we easily understand that the year 1857 is being talked about. So if we change the *Saptarṣi* calendar to Gregorian calendar the year of Abhinavagupta's *Nirvāṇa* comes to 1015-16 AD.

The sketchy information contained in his books do not provide enough material to arrive at a definite date of his date of birth or death. It needs further research. Unfortunately Kalhaṇa has not mentioned his name in hi chronicles. Yet there is enough evidence that Abhinavagupta had some connection with the contemporary kings. One his disciples was a former minister of the local king of Kashmir. Whether Abhinavagupta has given the time of writing of the verse in the *Bhairava Stotra* or he has recorded the time of entering the cave, can be a point of discussion. He may have written the verse before entering the cave. So only the approximate date can be reached on the basis of available sources. That date comes to January 04, 1016 AD.



# 7.

## The Creative world of Abhinavagupta

It is said that Abhinavagupta had written about 42 books. But many of them are not available now. Some incomplete manuscripts have been found. Among his major works on Tantra, *Śaiva* philosophy, *Tantrāloka, Lāghavī* and *Bṛhadvimarśiṇī* are the most important. *Tantrāloka* is a massive encyclopaedic work that deals with Tantra and Śaiva meditation. To clarify the same subject in lesser words and easy language he wrote a smaller book titled *Tantrasāra*. Another similar kind of book is *Paramārthasāra*. His deliberations on his *Guru* Utpalācārya's famous work *Iśvarapratyabhijñā Kārikā* can be seen in his two works *Saṁkṣipta and Brihat Vimarśinī. Mālinī Vijayā Vārtikā* and *Parātriṁśikā Vivarṇa* are his important works on *Kula* tradition. *Parātriṁśikā Vivarṇa* is a commentary on *Rudramālā Tantra.* He had written *Śrīpūrva Śāstra* discussing *Mālinī Vijayā Tantra* but it is not available now. Among his early works are *Bodha Pañcadarśikā* and *Pūrṇapañcikā* out of which the latter is not available now.

Out of many *stotras* he has written, *Bhairava Stotra* is the most famous. But three of his important works are not overtly about Shaivism, though the aim certainly is to explain through the Śaiva point of view. *Bhagavadgītārthasaṅgraha* is the first such work. He has seen *Bhagavadgītā* as a conflict between spiritual and mundane knowledge and concluded that we can be free of spiritual ignorance only when we attain

supreme consciousness. The remaining two works are on the theory of drama and aesthetics. The first one titled *Abhinava Bhāratī* is a commentary on the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata Muni. The other one titled *Locana* is a commentary on Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka.* Among such other books is *Kāvyakautuka Vivarṇa*, based on one of the works of his *Guru* Bhaṭṭa Tauta, but it is not available now. Some authors list many other books as Abhinavagupta's works, such as *Anubhavanivedanam, Dehāstha Devatā Cakram, Paramārtha Dvādaśikā, Prakiraṇikā Vivarṇa* etc.

Following books of Abhinav gupta are available now.

*Tantrasāra,*

*Tantrāloka,*

*Paramārthacarcā,*

*Bodhpañcāśikā,*

*Paramārthasāra,*

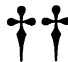
*Pratyabijñāvimarśinī,*

*Abhinavabhāratī,*

*Dhvnyāloklocana*

*Bhairavastotra, Kramastotra, Anuttarastotra, Dehasthadevistotra* and *Nivedanastotra* are small books on his *stotras*.

Besides these there many which find mention in various works but are not available. Pañcāśikā, *Śivadṛṣṭilocana* are some the important books are yet to be found.



# 8.

## Ācarya Abhinavagupta : Reflections on Poetry and Aesthetics

Ācārya Abhinavagupta's multidimensional persona developed at the feet of his *Gurus* under whose guidance he undertook thorough study and practice. He, no doubt had his natural talent, but he took it to new heights through his study of great works and internalising them and the devotion towards Lord Śiva was, of course the propelling force.

Abhinavagupta collected his nectar from various flowers and through his talent and fixity of purpose and constant effort turned it into a rare honey. One of his verses expresses spiritual facts through erotic-devotion—

> 'When *Śiva Bhakti* (the devotion towards Śiva), saw Abhinavagupta enjoying the nectar of literature she, in a frenzy went to him and caught hold of him. He, too overwhelmed with emotion, set aside all the social norms and under the total dominance of *Śiva Bhakti*, the beloved agreed to become a servant in the homes of the *Gurus*.' (*Tantrāloka*, 37.58-59)

This shows that he was an adept in the theory of *Rasa* and understood the importance of human emotions even in the expression of spiritual facts. This is a rare blend of poetic and philosophical talents, an exceptional entwinement of poetic beauty and philosophical depths.

What makes *Abhinavagupta* unique is not the separation of the erotic passion, poetry and devotion but their equanimous fusion. His liberal persona was shaped through the internalisation of several traditions of scriptural *Āgamaśāstaras,* so he gave music and literature their due place. Clarifying two concepts contained in a reputed work like *Vijñanabhairava* he says—

'When the mind of a *Yogī* becomes one with a song or such other thing, his sphere of being (*Mānasa*) expands and he becomes one with the ultimate (*Parama Tattva*).' (73)

'Wherever the mind gets satisfaction, a Yogī should fix his mind there only as it is from there that the bliss of the ultimate is expressed.' (74)

That is so because no time and no space are devoid of the touch of the omniscient and the omnipotent ultimate element. The Kashmir Shaivism appears to be a philosophy based on aesthetic deliberation. Lord Śiva himself is referred to as *Naṭarāja* and creation, situation, destruction, disappearance and kindness are his five functions. This is the secret of his dance and the divine sport. This world too is a drama that is played within us and outside us. The first precept of *Śivasūtra* is— *Caitanyātmā,* that means it is in the nature of the soul to be alert and awake. It is this soul that due to the curtain of ignorance forgets of hides its nature and plays varied roles, as an actor does on the stage. This three following precepts complete this metaphor—

'Soul is the actor. Like a person, who while keeping his self in the background holds on to the roles of many characters, the soul, too, keeping its nature hidden plays a worldly role. The conscience is the stage and the senses are the spectators. In this way a complete dramatic presentation is going on in our inner world.'

(*Śivasūtra*, 3.9-11)

Abhinavagupta's views regarding literature, arts and aesthetics can be understood in this context.

In Śaiva metaphysics nothing is untrue. Here, the

ignorance does not mean absence of knowledge but limited knowledge. This limited knowledge is called *Ajñāna,* which gives rise to discriminatory attitude, and puts a curtain over the powers of the ultimate with the independence of the ultimate itself, so that we lose contact with it. In this philosophy world is the common everyday world, neither untrue nor illusory.

Abhinavagupta's poetry and prose are full of literary excellence, but his multifaceted talent has made special contributions to the fields of musicology and literary studies. None of his works on musicology are available but Śāraṅgadeva in his *Saṅgīta Ratnākara* has mentioned Ācārya Abhinavagupta with reverence.

In the field of literary studies two world famous works are to his credit. The first is *Dhvanyālokalocana,* his commentary on *Dhvanyāloka,* the exceptional work of Ācārya Ānadavardhana, the originator of the *Dhvani* school of literary studies. Another famous commentary is *Abhinavabhāratī,* an explanation of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of *Bharata Muni.* Though these are commentaries, yet the stature of these is no less than original works. One of his commentaries is on another poetic work titled *Ghatakarparakulaka.* Like his *Paramaguru* that is the most reverend teacher Utpaladeva, he has written *Stotras* as well. This includes his most popular *Bhairavastotra,* singing which he ultimately entered the *Bhairava Cave* (Beerwah), a thousand years back, and became invisible to this mundane world.

In his most famous two commentaries *Dhvanyālokalocana* and *Abhinavabhāratī,* he has given detailed explanations of two famous *Sampradāyas* or schools of Indian literary studies. These schools are— *Dhvani* and *Rasa.* His *Guru* who taught him *Dhvani Sampradāya* is Bhaṭṭendurāja. He mentions Bhaṭṭa Tauta with reverence as his *Guru* of *Rasa Sampradāya. Tantrāloka* was written before these works and is considered the most authentic work on Tantra.

Before we go for any discussion of poetics it is

necessary to understand that aesthetic discussion does not exist as an independent way of thinking in India. But that does not mean that we do not have any principles of beauty or no investigations on the aesthetic element are available. This whole aesthetic discourse is available in the works based on the discussions on poetics and other arts such as music, sculpture, painting, etc. What is meant here is that the principles explained in poetics are relevant to other fine arts and aesthetics as well.

Abhinavagupta in the benedictory verse of His *Dhvanyālokalocana* has clearly mentioned the universal sense of beauty and beautification— 'One that without the availability of any reason creates or spreads an unprecedented and novel thing and fills this insipid, devoid-of-*Rasa* world with new interest and vigour, making it meaningful and interesting and being experienced respectively through the extension of poetic talent and utterance, lights up the material world, that element of Sarasvatī, uttered by a poet or a compassionate man (*Sahṛdaya)*is the *Sarasvatī element* (the element of the goddess of knowledge), the all-conquering poetry.

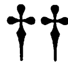
To complete the process of poetry, an internal dialogue is absolutely necessary between the poet and the receiver or the reader of poetry called *Sahṛdaya* in Indian poetics. The only available definition of *Sahṛdaya* is given by Ācārya Abhinavaguptga only—

> 'Through the practice of study and contemplation of poetries, whose spotless and vast mind-mirror has attained the ability to get absorbed in the describable thing; those experiencing the bliss of the dialogue with their heart are *Sahṛdaya* people.

In *Dhvanyālokalocana,* he has explained the *Dhvani* (sound of meaning) element propounded by the Kashmiri master Ācārya Ānandavardhana, and established that in the field of literary studies. Ānandavardhana has explained *Dhvani,* the meaning other than the primary meaning of the word, that sounds within the compassionate, *Sahṛdaya,* the receiver of poetry, as the soul of poetry. The poetry from

which emanate the meanings *other than* the meaning of the words that poetry is the best. The physical elements (words and their common meaning) that constitute this *other than* phenomenon is the soul of poetry. This meaning is called the trusted meaning (*pratīyamāna artha*), or the suggested meaning (*Vyaṅgyārtha*).

One of the great achievements of *Śaiva* philosophy is its non discrimination of women. Women have been equated with men in all rituals. Since it does not promote monistic life style for the devotees it has created a family *Dharma* for all.



# 9.

## The Historical Perspective

Art, culture, architecture and crafts on one hand and religion and philosophy on the other, invariably shape up the tolerant mindset and liberal thinking of the rulers of a particular historical period which in turn influences the functioning of the government, society and economics of the period which in turn again affect art, culture, architecture, crafts, religion and philosophy. Anarchy and famines or narrow minded reservations and intolerance between different points of view can never create a nurturing atmosphere for art and culture and naturally their development is not possible.

The age in which rise of great philosophers like Vasugupta and Abhinavagupta in Kashmir was witnessed, not only in Kashmir but in whole of India multidimensional and far-reaching events were taking place. In this series of events the contribution of Kashmir was decisive and important. In the western borders the threats of foreign invasions and the attacks of fanatically religious tribals was looming large and on the other hand a Kashmiri King committed to make impression on all India level, was moving out from the binding sphere of the valley and its hill towns. He was making Kashmir the center of a vast empire.

The empire of Kashmir was extended beyond Kashmir valley not only to adjacent hilly areas, Jammu, Poonch, Kishtwar, Bhaut, Balti and Darad areas but went

even beyond that to the valley of river Ganga and across to the mountains of Vindhyachala and even crossed those mountains to establish the power of the King of Kashmir. It was the same era when in the religious arena of the country Ādya Śaṅkarācārya was the dominant actor and in the region of Himalayan frontier the Buddhist philosophies were being deeply studied. Common people were deeply influenced with the *Bhāgvata dharma* and its concept of various incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu. So the atmosphere was totally conducive for the wave of Śaiva renaissance in Kashmir.

In the second half of seventh century the rule of *Karkoṭa* dynasty was established in Kashmir. The founder of this dynasty Durlabhavardhana would have never imagined that an ordinary employee of the King's royal stable entrusted with the job of feeding grass to the horses would become a King one day and his grandson rule over a vast empire. That grandson was the great king Lalitāditya Muktāpīḍa, whose story written by Kalhaṇa remains unbelievable for many historians as the English historians and other foreigners who have written the history of India have relied upon the materials and evidences supplied by the narratives of European writers only even if those narratives have been constructed out of the references of the writers who may have come centuries after. The famous *Indica* is such a so called 'reliable' narrative but when a local historian such Kalhaṇa writes about his time and place and his narrative, is not substantiated by some European writer it is natural for the above mentioned historians to cast a shadow of doubt over Kalhaṇa's facts.

The memories of Kalhaṇa's accounts were so widespread and deep in the society that the Asian and Chinese writers who came afterwards had to accept the expeditions of victory which Lalitāditya undertook. Al-bīrūnī has written about these expeditions, so did *Qazi Ismail* of Cacanāmā who calls himself contemporary of Mohammad bin Qasim and had come to India with the Arab King. Al-bīrūnī, too, had come to India with Mehmood Ghaznavi and lived here for many years. The facts Al-bīrūnī recorded about India were made available

to him by Indian scholars. He has written about Lalitāditya that he conquered Bengal in the east and Kabul in the west and many states beyond it. Al-bīrūnī did not substantiate these facts as he came to India about two and a half centuries after Lalitāditya. But seals and coins of Lalitāditya have been found in Bengal and Bihar which bear testimony to his military expeditions to these states.

There is an interesting reference about Lalitāditya in a historical book called *Cacanama* written by Qazi Ismail. It is a letter which was written by Raja Dahar of Sindh, where in he laments that he did not ask the king of Kashmir to help him in time against the Arab invader. According to him the Kashmiri king was most powerfull who's authority was felt up to Khurasan.



# 10.

## Lalitaditya's Strategy

Moving out of Kashmir to conquer other states may have been a compulsion for Lalitāditya which may have cropped up due to immediate dangers trying to encircle the Indian subcontinent. In 711 AD Muhammad bin Qasim laid the foundations of Arab empire in India after killing King Dahar of Sindh. During the reign of Khalifa Hashim his governor Junaid tried to extend the Arab empire outside Sindh. He began to move towards Punjab. The kingdoms around had no power to face him.

With the conquest of Sindh by Arabs Indian kings were feeling disappointed, but Lalitāditya came forward and pushed back Junaid. This was necessary for Lalitāditya as he had annexed a large part of Punjab to Kashmir. The Lahore and Jallandhar areas were under his direct control where his representatives ruled as administrators or governors. The rulers of the areas situated at the foothills of Afghanistan, too, were eager to come down to the plains. Perhaps, the Muslim invasions may have been making these Hindu Kings insecure and the expedition of Lalitāditya to that area, instead of being for territorial expansion, would have been to help those kings.

This is a hard fact of the Indian history that whenever there has been turmoil among Afghan tribes it has resulted in attacks through the region of Punjab. Punjab has been facing these attacks for thousands of years. In the middle age and the modern times there has hardly been any timely strategy to

tackle these aggressive machinations building up on the borders. Before the Britishers Ranjit Singh was such a farsighted king, who attacked Kabul and secured India from the attacks of Afghan tribals till independence of India. The attack came after the independence and Kashmir had to bear it.

Before Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Lalitāditya had exercised this strategy. Afghanistan had accepted the subordination of Kashmir without any resistance. In the eighth century Kashmir was the only state in India, which after annexing a sizeable portion of northwest could, not only become the central political power of the region, but after controlling the trade routes from Kashmir to central Asia could become a big commercial power as well. But a weak monarch could neither save the land nor ascertain the security of trade routes.

On getting the indication of a weak central government the states and tribes around would begin to rebel. So the danger was from northwest as well. Balti and Darad states adjacent to the Kashmir valley were thinking of coming down from their secure areas. The adjacent Tibet too, was in turmoil. Many tribes were infiltrating into the Chinese areas north of Tibet and some were heading towards the state of Kashmir in south. It was necessary for Lalitāditya to control these satraps. First and the foremost he took the Darad country or Gilgit under his control and then compelled Ladakh and the adjacent Mongol states to accept subordination. Then he began the campaign to control Tibet. It appears that he may have gone for a treaty with China as during this period no evidence of a war between Kashmir and China is available.

Taking the Silk route under his control was the greatest political success of Lalitāditya. Afterwards, King Avanitvarman reaped the benefits of this. But it appears that regarding Tibet Lalitāditya had become too ambitious. After he took Tibet under his control he got himself entangled in the conflict between China and Tibet and committed such a mistake that proved fatal. While returning from Tibet he had

to cross high mountains where he came across a heavy snowfall. It was a regular phenomenon in the north western frontier of Kashmir where scores of travellers would lose their lives in snowstorms every year. Nowadays, the vast area of the foothills that opens in Kashmir valley is known as *Devasaī.* Attempting to cross this area in the inclement weather proved to be the worst decision of Lalitāditya's life. With all his soldiers he was caught in a snowstorm and none of them could emerge alive from it.

The strategy to secure the borders of Kashmir was the greatest achievement of Lalitāditya. He clearly understood that the borders of Kashmir cannot be secured if the northern and north-western states of India are not secured. For this it was necessary to save whole of the north-western India and that only was the aim of his military strategy. The Arab invasion of Sindh was already a success and it was not difficult to understand for a farsighted ruler as Lalitāditya that Panjab was not at much distance from Sindh and the invaders would not need much time to reach the borders of Jammu and Kashmir. He knew that a new route for invasions had opened from the sea. Before this the vigil was to be maintained at the borders adjoining Afghanistan, Tibet, China etc. But now, the sea route was also to be taken care of to stop the invaders.

It was but natural that during this period, Kashmir got not just economic prosperity and new trade avenues but the government got enough financial resources to afford expenditure over cultural activities. Even today many archæological monuments of the period are among which besides many temples of various faiths, *Dharmaśālās* and *Vihāras*, is the world-famous *Mārtaṇḍa* temple. The grandeur of *Muktakeśava* temple, in the pinnacle of which 840 Kilograms of gold were used, is said to outshine even the *Mārtaṇḍa* temple. Lalitāditya renovated many archæological monuments of his time and built temples even in foreign countries. According to Kalhaṇa he built a temple of *Narasiṁha Avatāra* in Turkey.

The most important feature of this period was give and take of art and culture all over India. Wherever

Lalitāditya went he carried with him Kashmiri architecture as well. The specimens of Kashmiri architecture of this period have been found in many states of India. Many temples built in Kerala during the period of Perumala dynasty show the impact of Kashmir art. As per *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, 'The king returned after conquering seven areas of Konkana and sent his gate-keepers *(Dvārapālakas)* there, who built a temple near each gate. He built a temple in the capital *Mahodayapura* the architecture of which was the same as the *Mārtaṇḍa* of Kashmir.' Afterwards during the reign of Perumalas King Avantivarman also sent a religious preacher to the place. These cultural relations with south India continued till eleventh century.

Some scholars are of the view that *Namboodari* Brahmins may have migrated to Kerala from north India. It is said that the 64 gatekeepers who went to Kerala from Kashmir had built 64 temples. Were these Brahmins Namboodaris? *Keralapati,* a book describing the history of Kerala gives an account of the journey of Paraśurāma. According to this Paraśurāma threw his axe from *Gokarṇa* (a temple town located on the western coast in the state of Karnataka), due to which the water on the coast receded. A piece of land became visible which is called the *Paraśurāma Kṣetra* (the land of Paraśurāma). Then Paraśurāma called 64 Brahmins from north and established them in Kerala. This fable of Paraśurāma still prevails in one or the other form in Tamilnadu and the whole of Malabar area, and like Namboodari Brahmins other communities too, have been using it to establish their divine origin. Lalitāditya had begun the endeavour to establish the centres of knowledge and art and the process continued till other Indian rulers continued to keep their commitment to stop the foreign invaders. But unfortunately this could not be done for much time and the following three centuries saw the erosion and end of Kashmir as the centre of knowledge and arts. It must not be forgotten that it was this process that created the amazing fusion of religion and philosophy for which Kashmir is known.



# 11.

## The non-dualism of Śaṅkarācārya

This is an extraordinary coincidence that after only some years of Lalitāditya's south Indian expedition Ādya Śaṅkarācārya was born in Kerala and travelled from south to north to establish *Dharma*. This period from 700-1000 AD, was the period of churning of thought and craft and with these the spheres if religion and philosophy too, were being stirred. Śaṅkarācārya was an *Advaitic,* non-dualistic thinker. He was of the view that *Brahma* only is the truth and dwells within every being. The soul is the reflection of him only. That is why the ultimate expression prevailed—"I am *Brahma.*"

His most important contribution to philosophy is the essentiality of evidence. Evidence is essential to establish any thought or concept related to this universe. Without evidence nothing can be accepted as a fact. In those times also *Śruti* or *Vedas* were taken as the evidence acceptable to all. Śaṅkara did not accept this in toto. He was of the view that what is said in *Śruti* needs to be substantiated with perceptible knowledge, that means *Śruti* too, can be subjected to investigation. He considered objectivity and the phenomenal system essential to gain knowledge and gave secondary importance to individualistic subjective point of view.

The emphasis on questioning the knowledge given in *Śruti* was due to the shallow practice prevalent in the society that those who wanted to prove their claims, they lifted the

references from *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads*, without any consideration for the context and went on pressing their points. This created confusion about *Vedas*. Śaṅkara has laid down six principals to attain knowledge. To advance on the path of knowledge it is necessary to go through the following tests—

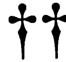
1. There must be harmony between prologue and epilogue that means that the deviation from motive must not occur at the end. There must be no contradiction between the beginning and the end.
2. The practice: Even on the repetition of the statement there should be no violation of the established order.
3. Uniqueness: The knowledge that is being attained should be original. It should not be a repetition of an already established point of view or thesis.
4. Result oriented: The knowledge must be result oriented. It must not be without a result.
5. Significance: The meaning and message do we get from it.
6. Rational: The argument under discussion should be examined and confirmed.

Śaṅkarācārya considered the worship of various gods and goddesses just the means to detach the devotee from the worldly attachments and lead him to the path of knowledge. But that only is not the way to attain salvation or boundless knowledge. This, actually, on the philosophical level, would create the problem of a dualistic feeling within the devotee. To attain *Brahma* it was essential to remove all the impediments in the path.

*Māyā* is very important in Śaṅkarācārya's analysis. The concept of *Māyā* is not the original concept of Śaṅkara. Its existence has been accepted in Vedas and Upanishads, but the way Śaṅkara discussed *Māyā* lead to a conflict between Śaivas and Vedāntists afterwards. *Īśopaniṣad* explains it as 'a golden curtain', the glitter of which deviates the devotee from his actual aim. According to *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, *Brahma* only is real rest all is just a cloud of words. *Māyā*, for Śaṅkarācārya

is such a sheath which is beyond words, which is made up of three *guṇas* or attributes (*Sat, Raj and Tam),* indescribable, against knowledge and a state of bewilderment. But this *Māyā* is subordinate to *Brahma* only. Māyā is possible only when *Brahma* wishes it to be.

'*Brahma* is true and the world is false'—the famous statement of Śaṅkarācārya, gives the impression that he does not believe in the existence of *Māyā* and considers it just a figment of imagination or a semblance. This has been made clear through an example. There is an empty pot filled with air. It is kept in the open. Now the air is inside the pot and outside as well. *Māyā* is just like this pot. Inside the pot is the *Jivātmā,* the soul, and outside the pot is *Brahma,* both are the same element. If the pot breaks what is inside and what is outside will become one. The same thing was later on, expressed by the saints and poets as the pot full of water. *Māyā* is the power of *Brahma* only and it is this power which creates this material world. Śaṅkarācārya suggests the path of self-control (*Indriya Nigraha)* to get across the sheath of *Māyā.* He does not want the devotee to indulge in this material world of *Māyā.*



# 12.

## The Buddhist influence in the foothills of Himalayas

At that time Buddhist influence existed in Kashmir and adjacent areas. The *Vajrayāna* sect was most prevalent in the foothills of Himalayas and Tibet. It was established in Tibet by the Indian scholar Guru Padmasambhava. Kashmir was under the influence of the *Mahāyāna* sect. It was not confined to the times of Aśoka and Kaniṣka only. Even under the rule of non-Buddhist kings the construction of Buddhist *Vihāras* continued in Kashmir. This fact needs to be underlined that out many countries Lalitāditya conquered a large number was Buddhist which besides Tibet, included Darad country later on known as Gilgit.

When Lalitāditya's armies were controlling the satraps in Gilgit, the work of making the written records of *Kamalasūtra,* and preserving the texts of the *sūtras* by keeping those in artistic caskets was continuing. Out of the famous *Gilgit manuscripts* some are of about the same period when the Śaiva renaissance in Kashmir valley was beginning. It is said that the third council of Buddhism was held in Kashmir during the reign of Kaniṣka, but some scholars contest the fact. There can be disagreement about whether the full Buddhist council was held or not but a big council was certainly held which possibly was primarily the council of the *Mahāyāna* sect. During this period the famous Buddhist scholar Nāgārjuna was in Kashmir. His concept of *Śūnyavāda,*

or emptiness was influential in Kashmir till Śaiva renaissance in Kashmir. Lalleśvarī and Nunda Ṛṣi often referred to as Nuruddin, both talk of *Śūnya*. Nunda Ṛṣi talks about the fusion of *Śūnya* and Śiva.

Till Aśoka's times idolatry was not prevalent in Buddhism. The symbols of Buddha were worshipped generally but in place of the idol of Buddha the seat would remain empty. Only Flowers, garlands, *Vajra, pāduka* sandals etc were kept as symbols. Buddha was taken as supernatural for the first time when Aśoka's efforts facilitated the spread of Buddhism in India and even in foreign countries, *stūpas* were built at many places. Many monasteries were constructed. This enabled the development of Buddhist architecture and encouraged the Buddhist sculpture as well.

In the beginning Buddhists considered worshipping or offering prayers useless. This would never make Buddha happy and he would never grant his blessings to the devotee. The basic difference between Buddha and Jesus is that Buddha never grants any boon nor does he shower 'grace' like Jesus. But once the idols were made and Buddha took the place of symbols, he was immediately rendered supernatural. Slowly and steadily the practice of meditation to get the grace of god became prevalent in Buddhism.

Various *Ācāryas* of *Mahāyāna* showed new ways, opened many new dimensions, but regarding Kashmir Nāgārjuna's influence is unparalleled. His two concepts gave new direction to *Mahāyāna*. Those concepts are his idea of '*Śūnya* (emptiness)' and his 'relativism'. An evaluation is always comparative, that means relative. Long always exists as compared to short, good as compared to bad.

*Tantra* is important to both Buddhism and Shaivism. *Tantra* has been used as a way of meditation to attain the ultimate consciousness, or the state of being one with *Brahma*. *Tantra* had been prevalent much before the Śaiva renaissance. But instead of being a means to attain the consciousness of the ultimate, it was used to satisfy individual and sensual urges. In the eighth century Padmasambhava (Guru Rimpoche) established Tantric Buddhism in Tibet. Its aim was to destroy

the evil forces. But instead of destroying the evil forces, the Tantric way aims at putting the evil forces on the path of goodness and *dharma*. These evil forces of Tibet were put on the path of *dharma*, but here also, with the passage of time *Tantra* became the way to attain miraculous powers.

Whether Kashmir was influenced with Tibet or both influenced each other, it is clear that *Tantra* had deviated from its philosophical and *dhārmika* aims. A time came when the influence of *Tāntrikas* in Kashmir was so overwhelming that they only would decide who would be the king. The situation was same as in Iran where many centuries ago *Mug* Brahmins had taken over the royal authority. The need to classify *Tantra* into *dakṣiṇamārga* and *Vāmamārga* may have arisen at this point of time.

In seventh century the social and political changes affected literary and philosophical environment as well an the need to analyse and redefine values and principles began to be felt. Even if Śaṅkarācārya had played a major role in dislodging Buddhism from the centrestage yet there were some theoretical reasons behind it. As compared to *Vedānta* and Shaivism, Buddhism could not put forward the concept of an ultimate god to understand the world, nor could it accept the proof of any book. Like Śaṅkara it did not give a separate explanation of *Pramāṇa,* which we may call proof or evidence. It was near about fifth century when Buddhists felt the need to go for proof or evidence.

When the Śaiva faith was spreading in Kashmir, the Vaiṣṇavite faith, too, was popular among the common people. Many kings were Vaiṣṇavites. Lalitāditya himself was a Vaiṣṇavite. Lord Rāma and Lord Kṛṣṇa had become the principal deities. It can be seen in the remnants of the ancient temples that despite the prevalence and propagation of Buddhist and Śaiva faiths, the influence of *saguna bhakti,* the worship of God possessed of attributes, was significant. This was the reason that Abhinavagupta felt the need to write *Gītārthasaṅgraha.* It must be understood that since the beginning of eighth century itself, the scholars of different philosophies and arts had begun to visit Kashmir. From the far

south up to Bengal and from the north east to central India, the currents of knowledge were pouring in, making Kashmir a grand confluence of these currents of knowledge.



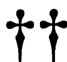
# 13.

## The Trika Philosophy—I am Śiva

What is *Śaiva* philosophy? Like *Vedānta* this too is a theistic philosophy, and in a *Vedāntic* manner considers, *Brahma* or Śiva omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. Śaivas call him Śiva, *Parama Caitanya* (the ultimate consciousness) or *Ātmana.* Thus both are non-dualistic. As per *Vedānta* the ultimate aim is to become one with *Brahma* and according to Shaivism it is to be one with Śiva. The basic concepts are *Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi* (I am Brahma) and *Śivoham* (I am Śiva) respectively. Shaivism believes that Śiva dwells within every being (*Jīva*) and it can be experienced only by pure knowledge attained through unceasing meditation. *Jīva* is a miniature of Śiva. Though Śiva is complete within him and does not need anything yet he is always active. It is this activity which inspires him to expand so that he attains the form of the universe.

Śiva is the ultimate consciousness. But when he expands he needs to be functional. But he does not initiate the functions himself. He gives birth to a kinetic form that is called Śakti which is also the feminine form of Śiva. The woman gives birth so she is considered the symbol of creativity. It is because of Śiva's functionality that the creation comes into existence and the expansion of Śiva occurs because Śiva gives birth to Śakti, becomes functional due to her kinetic energy and creates the world. So he himself pervades everything that is movable and immovable.

The perpetual kinetic functionality of Śakti is called *Spandana* (sphygmus). This minute vibration is in the nature of this material world. Within an atom various sub particles are continuously functional, continuously involved in their dance. Due to this minute activity also, a tremble or a vibration occurs. This vibration is the characteristic of creation. This feeling is symbolically expressed in the visualisation of the functional Śakti dancing on the chest of Śiva. This in fact is the expansion of creation. It is this minute vibration that a *yogī* or a devotee experiences and floats on the waves of bliss. But to achieve this state, a guide, a *guru* is needed. The *Mantra* he passes on to a disciple is like a power-infusion that makes the disciple to progress on the path of bliss. A *Mantra* is a seed full of unlimited power. It is only on getting the proper nourishment within a devotee that a *Mantra* enables the devotee to experience the *Spandana*.



# 14.

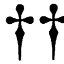
## Creation is the expansion of Śiva

Making of Śakti from Śiva and giving birth to the world or the creation has been explained in detail in *Śaiva* philosophy. The creation of this universe is the perception *(Ābhāsa)* of the experience of the expansion of *ParamaŚiva.* It has been referred to as perception because the diverse forms in which *ParamaŚiva* expresses himself as the creation is an experience and an experience has no meaning if it is not perceived. It is the perception that makes an experience a reality. Nothing but Śiva is involved in the creation of this universe. He is complete in himself and needs nothing. Then why does he express himself in the form of diversity of creation?

Abhinavagupta says that Śiva is complete within him and is in a state of ultimate bliss. But this bliss cannot be a state of stillness or stagnation. This bliss has got an inherent deliberation in it. This deliberation is a deliberate consciousness of being conscious, which means that very consciousness is the source of functionality. When this state of consciousness of *ParamaŚiva* expands outside itself the universe comes into existence. Contrary to this when he pulls this consciousness back, the creation ends. All creation gets absorbed. This is what we call *Pralaya* or the destruction of universe. A sort of dualism seems to be associated with the birth of creation. The oneness of *ParamaŚiva* and the diversity of creation are face to face with each other. But actually these

are not different from each other; the borders merge into one other.

When Śiva, the infinite soul, wants to be expressed as *Puruṣa,* the finite soul, naturally he imposes several constraints on himself. He has to become many from one, finite and dependant from infinite and independent which means he has to become an animal that is not free. This whole structure of bindings is called the *Māyā.* When the pure consciousness of *ParamaŚiva* is affected with *Māyā,* it is restrained within five kinds of boundaries or we may say five kinds of sheaths conceal it. These are called five *Kañcukas (limitations).* The *ParamaŚiva* becomes a *Cidāṇu* (Spiritual monad) and assumes a gross physical body. It is at this point that the residual impressions of the *Karmas* running from previous creations too envelop him. To penetrate the *Kañcukas* (limitations), the devotee has to pass through several phases and reach the situation where the ultimate conscious form of *ParamaŚiva* is experienced. But *Śaktipāta,* the infusion of power, is needed for this which is possible only through the grace of Śiva. This *Śaktipāta* is possible only through the *Guru,* but the grace of Śiva is incorporated in the *Śaktipāta* itself.



# 15.

## From Parāvāka (the higher speech) to Māyā

From the available historical sources the Śaiva renaissance in Kashmir dates back to eighth century but the Śaivas consider it just the renaissance. They believe that Shaivism existed even before creation. In the beginning it was in the form of *Parāvāka,* the higher speech which, in fact was speechless speech. Slowly and steadily it began to manifest in form of images which was termed as *Paśyanti Vāka.* At this stage the sound possesses qualities of colour and form. This changed into the third form known as *Madhyamā* that enabled the expression of thought and experience in words. It was in this form that Śaiva *śāstras* manifested. Śaiva masters believe that the scriptural *Āgama Śāstras* existed even before the four prevalent paths. Their situation is the same as is of Vedas in *Vedānta*. These are considered of divine origin. After the elimination of Śaiva philosophy in the *Kaliyuga* it was re-established through *Śiva Sūtras* in eighth century.

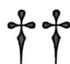
The Śaiva philosophy aims at reaching one ultimate goal that is Śiva but four traditional paths were suggested to achieve the goal—*Krama* tradition, propounded by Airakanath, *Kula* Tradition put forth by Sumatinātha, *Spanda,* which is associated with Vasugupta, and *Pratyabhijñā* for which the credit goes to Somānanda, a disciple of Vasugupta. All the paths aim to stimulate the individual power of the seeker to enable him to attain the collective

power for the expansion of the self. But to walk on the path they begin the journey from different points. If we take the *Krama* tradition the seeker works on the level of energy. He attempts to leave his individual energy behind to internalise the universal energy, to experience the energy that permeates the whole universe. The *Kula* tradition works on the levels of authority. It aims at transcending the individual authority to become one with the universal authority.

*Ātman* has been given several names— Śiva, *ParamŚiva or paramacaitanya,* etc. It dwells in this movable and immovable world between all creatures and immovable things and it is the real truth which is beyond time, space and directions. The diversity of this universe is the expression of *Ātman* only and there is no power, nor any cause of any existence but *Ātman.* This aspect of *ParamŚiva* is Śakti which is inseparable from him.

The diversity of *Śakti* or power leads to creation and its constriction causes destruction. When Śiva wants to create he needs to limit himself and these limits are created through *Shakti.* Then *Māyā* controls everything. It blocks the actual experience in such a way that one can have limited experience only. It changes all the previous experiences. The *Māyā* makes the consciousness numb. It blocks the sense of distinction between the pure and the impure. It affects the qualities of eternity, pervasiveness, perfection, omniscience, omnipotence of Śiva and creates a feeling of vanity. *Parama Śiva,* the supreme consciousness is expressed through Śakti, but still Śiva is dominant and supreme. This dominance is termed as *Vidyā Tattva* and the feeling of Śiva as protecting deity comes to us through what is called *Śuddha Vidyā.* The *Tattva* is god and individual both. The consciousness of *Vidyā Tattva* along with the sense of activity which may emerge from it is *Śuddha Vidyā.* When this state of *Śuddha Vidyā* is enveloped in five sheaths the product formed is called *Puruṣa.* The inner core remains unchanged in the state of *Śuddha Vidyā.* Though internally all *Puruṣas* too are the same but the sheath of *Māyā* makes them to feel different, but to connect the *Puruṣas* with each other the *Prakṛti* comes forward.

*Prakṛti* is which is found in its natural state of creation. It is responsible for manifesting different forms. It connects the *Puruṣa* with different states within a limited sphere. Pleasure, grief and attachment are the bases of *Prakṛti.* These are called qualities or *Guṇas.* On the intellectual level the relationship of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* is associated with *Buddhi, Ahaṅkāra and Manas. Ahaṅkāra* is the element of ego that is limitless in case of *ParamaŚiva* and very limited in case of *Puruṣa*. *Ahaṅkara* is created in form of *Puruṣa* on the basis of experiences but *Buddhi* or intellect co-ordinates these experiences and provides a sound basis to *Puruṣa. Manas* creates images out of signals got through senses. These are the signals from the outer world. *Manas* is the bridge between the senses and the identification of things.

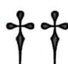


# 16.

## The Sheath of Māyā

Māyā inhibits the identification of *Bhahma* or *ParamaŚiva* and to meet *ParamaŚiva* it is essential to cross this barrier. Śaivas and Vedāntists both are aware of this fact. Both have suggested means to come out of this sheath. The difference is that the Śaivas say that the negation of *Māyā* is not needed and the attainment of supreme consciousness is possible even after enjoying the world created by *Māyā*. But Śaṅkarācārya says that it is not possible to overcome *Māyā* after enjoying it. The consciousness that permeates the whole universe is called *Citta*. This is the basic element but when Śiva changes into the *Jīva* the influence of *Māyā* creates many *Malas* or impurities. The spiritual effort of a Practiceris the attempt to get rid of these impurities. To get rid of these shackles of 'Māyā' the Śaiva philosophy suggests some *Kriya Upāyas,* or activities. This includes *yogāsanas, prāṇāyāma* and other activities of *Haṭha yoga*. It is believed that this prepares body and mind for the coming phases of *Sadhanā* or spiritual effort. These practices create mental balance. *Śākta* measures are primarily the means to equilibrate mind and brain. *Dhyāna* and *Mantra* are very important for this. The devotee practices to concentrate all his attention on Śiva. It is important to reach the real truth beneath the five sheaths or *Kañcukas.* The third method called *Śambhavopāya* is the most difficult but the most effective. In this the practiser focusses his attention

within himself to experience the *ParamaŚiva*. This practice aims at, taking the wandering mind towards the centre and fix it there. Then the state of super-consciousness called *turya* state is experienced. *Anupāya* is the last state where no measures are needed. The practiser automatically reaches the state of rest. This is the divine state where the practiser reaches the *Turyātīta* state, the state of being without any vibration, the state of ultimate bliss, the consciousness of Śiva. This is a state where the whole world appears to be like our soul. In the *Turīya* state the mind becomes faint. It can still expect being awake, in a dream or in a state of dormancy but the *Turyātīta* state transcends this state and everything appears to be like Śiva or soul.



# 17.

## The structure of Tantra



*aiva*-philosophy is inseparably associated with Tantra but many misconceptions prevail regarding *Tantra.* So it is necessary to understand what is *Tantra.* If we take just the meaning of the word it can be understood as expansion. The word may have been taken from the technique of weaving clothes. In this sense *Tantra* means to give expansion to various elements in a certain sequence. It is a means to explain complex subjects. *Tantra* is the divine knowledge contained in scriptural *Āgama* works obtained from *ParamaŚiva. Tantra* tells us what is appropriate to reach it and gives a systematic knowledge of what is to be done to get infused with energy and purification.

The scriptural *Āgama* works are of utmost importance in *Tantra.* Generally all Buddhists and Śaivas agree that *Āgamas* are the reserves of knowledge obtained at the time of creation. Śaivas see these as the knowledge that has come from *ParamaŚiva* itself. In Tibet the prevalent belief is that Ācārya Asaṅga had got these *Āgamas* from the heavens and Maitreya gave him the right to put them to use. 'Who was Maitreya' is still being debated. Some people call him the future Buddha and some take him as a *Siddha,* an accomplished monk.

It is said that the secret of *Śaivāgamas* is not to be disclosed to everybody. One should deserve it. In the commentary of *Tantrāloka,* Jayaratha has written that it

incorporates the perfection of every feeling and limitless *Śāstra* and several forms of knowledge. In the beginning it may have been carried forward through a teacher-disciple tradition and then may have been disclosed to the common people. Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj has said, "What we call the spontaneous enlightenment, is in fact, not spontaneous, it is caused by *Āgama* itself. The knowledge of great Buddhist sages Asaṅga, Nāgārjuna and ancient sages, besides the experience of the essence of *Mantras* may have come through this process only. The knowledge attained thorough *Tantra* may be classified under three heads—Yogic, *Śakta* and others. The oldest use of the word *Tantra* is found in Vedas. The instances of spiritual experiences of mystic sages and saints can be seen in the Vedic era itself. There are expressions of such states of existence of the sages where the experience themselves as floating in the air. It is in that era that the forms of mother goddess were worshipped. There are several phases of attaining Śivahood. At first the consent of *Guru* to show the path of knowledge is needed. The knowledge of *Tantra* is not possible without a *Guru*. Then Yogic meditation is needed as well. *Prāṇāyāma*, the practice of breath control and *yogāsanas*, the practice of postures is included in this. *Mudrā, mantra, maṇḍala* and *yantra* are the other phases through which one has to pass.

In *Tantra* the rule is to understand the body, not to run away from it. In this context, the practices like meat eating, consuming liquor, sexual relation have been discussed a lot in the west. The left handed meditation or *Vāmācārī* systems have existed in many Tantric schools of meditation, but in general one who eats meat, consumes liquor regularly and indulges in sex is considered to be in an animal state *(Paśubhāva)*. One who is in the animal state is considered to be selfish and violent. Tantra assures to take us out of this animal state and lead us to heroic state *(Vīra Bhāva)*. It directs the spiritual practiser to employ tough means to achieve this, in which fasting, meditation, control on sensual pleasures, *yoga*, etc. are included, so that the body and the mind are purified and negative feelings are eradicated. This takes the spiritual practiser to the heroic state *(Vīra Bhāva)*, which is

the state of freedom from urges. The heroic posture (*Vīra mudrā)* is the favourite posture of a *yogī*.

The practices of *Tantra, Mantra* and *Yantra* are the primary aspects of spiritual exercise; *Tantra* the philosophy, *Mantra* of invoking the divine powers and *Yantra*, the instruments of the spiritual exercise.

It is clear that *Tantra* was prevalent in Kashmir and many centres of India before the Śaiva renaissance in Kashmir. There is no doubt about the antiquity of *Tantra*. It is on this basis that some specialists declare it as predating Vedas. Their argument is based on the fact that the indications of Tantric practices have been found in the archæological findings of Indus Valley Civilization. The worship of mother goddess is one of the examples. The basis on which it has been called pre-vedic is that western historians had imagined the Aryan invasion and the settlement in India. This has lost relevance after the discovery of new facts. There are several aspects in Indus Valley Civilisation on the basis of which it can be called Vedic. The depiction of altars of sacrificial fire *(Yajña Vidi)*, and many Upanishadic *sūtra* are strong indicators of this. According to Swami Laksman joo, a modern scholar of Śaiva philosophy and a sage himself, the Śaiva philosophy of Kashmir is based on 94 *Tantras* referred to as *Āgamas* as well. *Āgamas* are the texts rendered by lord Śiva himself. Out of these *Tantras* 64 are purely non-dualistic *(Advaita)*, 18 a blend of dualistic and non-dualistic *(Dvaitādvaita)* and 10 purely dualistic *(Dvaita)* in nature.

*Trika* Śaiva philosophy is based on non-dualistic *Tantra*. *Trika* deals with *Nara* (the Individual), *Śakti* (the universal energy), and *Śiva* (the universal consciousness). Swami Laksman joo delivered many lectures on *Śaiva*-philosophy in 1971 which made it a point of discussion not only in India but in other countries as well. These lectures were later on published in the form of a book. It is well understood that at the rime of Śaiva renaissance all the three lines of thought *Dvaita*, *Dvaitādvaita* and *Advaita* were prevalent in one or the other form. In *Kaliyuga* when Śiva directed Durvāsā, to propagate Śaiva-philosophy, he too told

his *Mānasaputras*, about these three lines of thought only.

During the time of Vasugupta, too, there were various Śaiva sects in Kashmir among which there were those sects as well which are commonly referred to as *Kāpālikas*. These were the ones who rebelled against the established beliefs and practices and considered the left handed way of meditation *(Vāmācāra),* as the appropriate method. It is said that *Mahākālī* was the presiding deity of *Kāpālikas*. It is from there that she found place in other Śaiva sects. Besides these, there were some other Tantric methods which were later on incorporated into his *Trika* philosophy by Abinavagupta. *Krama* and *Kula,* both have been ancient traditions. The basis of *Kāpālika* system is *Bhairava Tantra.* These traditions may have influenced *Kula* and *Krama* traditions which decreased with the passage of time. *Krama* became a co-ordinating line of thought between Tantric and *Śakta* tradition.

Buddhists had incorporated *Tantra* in the very beginning but after Buddha was taken as supernatural the Buddhist *Tantra* underwent a change. Guru Padmasambhava, a sage of north India, was called to Tibet to eliminate the demonic powers. It was he who established *Vajrayāna* in Tibet and Ladakh.



# 18.

## Śaiva Philosophy: Main points

1. In the state of bliss, Śiva does not sit inactive, he wants to expand himself. For this he expresses himself in form of *Śakti* which is one of his forms and depends on him. So the power of *Śakti,* which helps in the creation of this universe, has itself been created by the command of Śiva. Despite being of a lower order, *Jīva* or soul has *Śiva* within it. *Śiva* has made *Jīva* in his own form. So he cannot be different from *Śiva* or supreme consciousness. It is for this reason that Śaivas do not consider sensual pleasures which we get from worldly things renounceable. Going through the experience of these pleasures only can show us the path to reach *ParamaŚiva.* Giving up worldly pleasures or renouncing the world is not essential for the Śaiva way of life.

2. This argument takes us to another characteristic. To practice the path of Śiva has nothing to do with caste, creed or colour, anybody can reach the state of supreme consciousness and has the right to go for it, because if *Śiva* is within everybody, how can the distinction of a lower and higher birth be there? Abhinavagupta says— 'O my practiser! Whoever has treaded this path of *Parama Bhairava* with pure mind, walking fast or slow, a Brahmin or a sweeper, an untouchable or whoever, is bound to meet *ParamaŚiva* only.

3. To reach *ParamaŚiva* or to get dissolved into the supreme consciousness Tantric practice is considered important for the Śaiva path. Tantric path is not a Śaiva contribution. Tantric practices are known even before the times of Christ. Abhinavagupta himself has accepted the prevalence of many paths. Among them, besides Vedic and Śaiva paths are included the left-handed and right-handed Tantric methods. To what extent was the left handed method popular in Abhinavagupta's times is not easy to ascertain. Some occult communities existed but Abhinavagupta did not consider himself belonging to the *Vāmamārgī* method. But after nineteenth century, Shaivism was associated with the *Vāmamārgī* path by western scholars which lead to an unrealistic image of it and Tantra is considered the path of free sensual pleasure.

Many Śaiva arguments and propositions have been taken from *Sāṅkhya, Yoga* and *Nyāya* schools of thought and some influences have been accepted from Buddhist philosophers as well. In this respect it was not the philosophy that competed with the contemporary philosophies like *Advaita* of Śaṅkara and Buddhism but it acted as the co-ordinating path of all these.

4. *Spanda, Krama, Kula* and *Pratyabhijñā* are considered to be the pillars of Śaiva way of thinking but on the philosophical level *Spanda* and *Pratyabhijñā* are known as its pillars. *Spanda* tradition, associated with Vasugupta is an original principal that enables us to see and understand all the movable and immovable objects available in this universe. Though Vasugupta got this knowledge from *Śivasūtras* yet people could not understand it till his disciple explained it. Vasugupta's works *Spanda Kārikā* and *Bhairava Tantra* are the representative texts of this concept. *Spanda* means movement or vibration, but whose vibration and within whom? Vasugupta says that the whole consciousness is a type of vibration and *Spanda* is the vibration of the beating of the divine heart. In other words it is the

vibration that leads to the enables the experience of the superconsciousness. So everything is vibration, be it the material world or the consciousness of *ParamaŚiva. Citta,* the consciousness that permeates the whole universe, the independence of *Citta,* its active energy or *Visarga,* its ocean of light or *Hṛdaya* and enlightened consciousness or *Cidānanda* are expressed through this vibration or *Spandana. Pratyabhijñā* is the last phase of the journey that leads us to *Śiva. Śiva* dwells in the soul of the individual. It never leaves us but we do not recognise him. When we take our mind to the point where we can recognise him, then the search for any means ends. It becomes available spontaneously without any means. What was with us has been recognised. *Kula* and *Krama* are two phases of spiritual practice which may enable a spiritual aspirant to reach that state of recognising *Śiva.* But without internalising the science of *Spanda* no path can lead us to the state that is beyond the state of superconsciousness known as *Turya.*

*Svātantrya* or independence is an amazing concept of *Shaiva*-philosophy. The energy of superconsciousness is independent within itself; it is under the control of nobody. All *Jīvas* or souls are parties to this supremeconsciousness. In proportion of their consciousness, the *Puruṣas* or the finite souls, too, have the urge to get divine independence. It is possible that they may be unaware of this ability. We all are parties to the consciousness of *ParamaŚiva,* so we are parties to his independence as well. So the aim of the Śaiva practice is to work for that divine independence. But according to Kashmir *Śaiva* philosophy, without a capable *Guru,* proper teaching of Śaiva philosophy is not possible. Tantric practice is not possible without a *Guru,* a teacher. Without the infusion of energy or *Śaktipāta* from a *Guru* the practice cannot be carried forward and that infusion of energy is the grace of Śiva showered through a *Guru.*

5. Abhinavagupta himself, attempted to gain knowledge from different *Ācāryas*, but he was certain that

knowledge is not just a cobweb of words. Emphasising the importance of a competent *Guru* he wrote, "There are many ignorant people who have deviated from the path and are bound with the shackles of tall talking already. In this way many blind followers carry the load of their *Gurus*, and I have created this triad (*trika*) so that they can break free of their shackles.



# 19.

## The Laboratory of Indian Philosophies

ome critics have called Śaṅkarācārya a disguised Buddhist and some have referred to him as a pseudo-Śaiva. To call such a scholar a Buddhist who proved to be the biggest challenge for the Buddhist philosophy and is held responsible for the eradication of Buddhist influence, seems to be awkward, but is nevertheless important. He appears to be a Buddhist because he formed community of Vedantic monks. Like the Buddhist *Saṅghas*, Śaṅkarācārya established a system to base his monks in different *Maṭhas,* where the discipline was as strict as Buddhist *Saṅghas*. These *Maṭhas* (monasteries) and Acharas are still running under the same rules and the system established by Śaṅkarācārya still prevails.

Śaṅkarācārya may have felt that these *Saṅghas* are responsible for the unity of different Buddhist sects and their power lies in these *Saṅghas and Vihāras* and he established his *Maṭhas* (monasteries) and *Āśramas* on these lines to established strongly interwoven communities of his monks. But such communities of monks were not prevalent among Buddhists only, such non-Buddhists communities, too, existed in the society. Some historians are of the view that Śaṅkara adopted some of these communities and changed them for his purpose. But how can that make him a Buddhist in disguise? He could be termed such only when he would have incorporated Buddhist principles in his philosophical

argument or distorted those to fit into his way of thinking.

In fact, Buddhist philosophers in many ways have owned many arguments from *Vedānta* or have taken the support of *Sāṅkhya* philosophy. The soul is *Nirguṇa*, without attributes, is the basic belief of *Vedānta* but when a Buddhist scholar Asaṅga, while writing a commentary on the *sūtras* of another master Maitreyanātha writes that the soul in its basis is absorbed in non-soul (*Nairātmya*), that too means the same.

According to famous historian Acharya Narendra Dev, when we depart from the point of view of Nāgārjuna, we unwittingly reach a point where the Śaṅkara's non-dualism is in front of us, Buddha left many questions unanswered, beyond which Buddhist masters felt the need to find out the reasons. Asaṅga was faced with a big problem—Is Buddha one or many? His argument was that one is not possible nor can we agree with many. His argument is based on the example that has well known Advaitic connections. The famous Upanishadic illustration regarding this is that when rivers are separate the ways in which they expand and what they provide is always separate. But when they meet the sea they become one.

*Yoga* has had its significance for every philosophy that evolved in India, be it *Vedānta*, Buddhism or Shaivism. In the Buddhist tradition detailed explanations of *Yoga* are available. In different sects or yānas all methods of *yoga* beginning from normal to six-fold or *haṭha* have been discussed. Without yogic practices neither Buddhist nor Śaiva devotion is possible. The path to reach *ParamaŚiva* involves many phases and *kriyā* or *yogāsana* is an important phase in which *Haṭhāsanas* are included and *Prāṇāyāma* or breath control and *Dhyāna* or meditation are essential parts of it. These are indispensable to reach the next phase of devotion.

According to Patañjali, *yoga* is self-control. That means we can get rid of the attachments triggered by *Māyā* through control over sensual pleasures. Though Śaivas do not believe in running away from *Māyā,* yet they do not find any contradiction with the Vedantic idea that the aim of *yoga* is to get rid of sensual appetites because when a Śaiva devotee get

*Śaktipāta* or the infusion of energy from the *Guru*, the first thing which is expected of him is the control over his sensual pleasures. The purpose of yogic *Āsanas* and *Haṭhayoga* is to be free. When a devotee reaches this stage, then only he can expect to reach the stages that follow.

Some people oppose Śaṅkarācārya on the basis whether he opposed *Tantra* or not. If *Tantra* has not place in his non-dualism then how is it incorporated in the rituals carried out in his *Maṭhas* (monasteries)? In fact, much confusion prevails regarding Śaṅkarācārya. He was not against *Śiva* or Shaivism. He took his initiation from a *Guru* who was a scholar of Śaiva tradition. His famous work *Saundaryalaharī*, too, is related to Tantric practice. As mentioned earlier, *Tantra* was first mentioned in *Ṛgveda* only. Actually, Śaṅkarācārya had the compulsion to work on two levels. He was not only a philosopher, but felt the responsibility to counter the anti-Veda feelings all over the country. For the common people he gave acceptance to many things but did not accept those on the philosophical level, for example worshipping gods and goddesses. His non-dualism should have no place for Gods and Goddesses. This, according to Śaṅkara created the problem of getting a third inhibiting force between the individual and *Brahma*. But the devotee who cannot stabilise his mind to that extent for his there is no option but to worship Gods and Goddesses to stabilise his mind. So despite the practice of *Tantra* being indispensable for the hermits, it has not been made essential for the common devotees. We have to keep in mind that from the ancient times *Tantra* remains associated with *Yoga*. Buddhists call it *Tantra yoga*.

Are the aims of *Vedānta* and Shaivism different? As per *Vedānta* salvation must be the aim of a devotee. Salvation is nothing but the state of being one with the ultimate reality which is *Brahma*. Śaṅkarācārya wants to penetrate the barrier of *Māyā* to reach the goal because he considers *Māyā* as a deterrent that does not let you reach *Brahma*. This does not mean that Śaivas do not take *Māyā* as a deterrent. The barrier of the five *Kañcukas* is important for Śaivas but their

argument is that if *Māyā* is the sport of *Brahma* only why should it be considered different from *Brahma*? That too should be experienced. This means that after the salvation the vast experience of this sport of *Brahma* which is all creation or this whole universe is not different from the experience of *Brahma*. Why should that be denied? In this context the Śaiva scholar Devavrata Sensharma says that in *Ṛgveda* we have a famous verse that can be translated like this— 'the breeze is blowing and expanding the sphere of bliss, the bliss emanates from water as well, whole of the universe blissful.' This is a more extensive thought. The whole creation has been taken as divine and spontaneity has been felt. Uniformity has been established. Śaivas too want this only.



# 20.

## The Seat of Omniscience in the temple of mother goddess Śaradā

It appears from this that the relationship of *Vedānta* and Shaivism with the attributeless, shapeless, omniscient and omnipotent knowledge that is *Brahma* has got two aspects. Some people began to take Śaṅkarācārya as an incarnation of lord Śiva. It must be kept in view that most of the monasteries and *Akhāḍās* associated with Śaṅkara are related less with Lord Viṣṇu and more with Lord Śiva. That is why after the Muslim dominance in Kashmir whatever remains of philosophy were available in the idioms, proverbs and mystic poetry of Kashmir , somewhere we can see the expression of Śaiva and somewhere the incorporation of Vedantic elements. What is interesting is that after about two centuries of Abhinavagupta Lalleśvarī, herself being a Śaiva, condemns Kashmiri Pandits for their meat eating habits. Here she is advocating the control over senses only. Before the Muslim dominance there was a mixed influence of Śaiva, Vedantic and *Bhāgavata* faiths in Kashmir, in which we could see some glimpses of Buddhism as well. Kashmir has been a laboratory of philosophies, where the symbols are obvious, but the philosophy remains hidden in books and manuscripts.

Abhinavagupta and Śaṅkarācārya were not contemporaries. When Śaṅkarācārya came to Kashmir during his endeavour to spread his thought, the work on Shaivism

had begun but had not reached the point where it could have an overwhelming influence. So Śaṅkara and Śaivas may have had a conversation, but a full-fledged discussion between them may not have occurred, but at that time also the worship of goddess Shakti was very popular. Goddess Śāradā, the presiding deity of the *Śāradā Maṇḍala* (the land of goddess Śaradā), had in her temple, a seat of omniscience. This seat was offered to the greatest philosophers and thinkers. Śaṅkarācārya was the first south Indian master who was offered this seat. But Śaṅkarācārya, neither opposed Shaivism, nor had any problems with the worship of Śakti. This is not just a coincidence but a fact as well. At present also, the worship of mother Goddess Śakti is carried out with full enthusiasm, be it *Kṣīra Bhavānī* or *Vaiṣṇo Devī,* and other Gods are not held in such esteem.

This colossal interaction between philosophies and faiths did not only turn Kashmir into a laboratory of philosophical method but creativity attained new heights in every field. These were the times when Kashmir contributed a lot towards Sanskrit literature. Very less is known about the contribution of Kashmir towards ancient literature. Generally, *Nīlamatapurāṇa* is associated with Kashmir, which most probably has been written in fourth century. *Vasukīpurāṇa,* a *purāṇa* giving information about *Nāga* race has also been written. In the area of Jammu as well, *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* has been written. But all these have been written before fifth century. Between eighth and eleventh century many books on history and grammar were written.

Many works on his were written before Kalhaṇa. Kalhaṇa has referred to some of these books. He has taken a lot of material from Kṣemendra. Bilhaṇa, an eminent poet wrote *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* based on the south Indian Calukya King Vikramāditya. Most of the Sanskrit scholars of Indian poetics, Vāmana, Udbhaṭṭa, and Ānandavardhana in the eighth and ninth centuries and Abhinavagupta in the tenth belonged to this land of Śāradā. In the field of fiction *Kathāsaritsāgara* of Somadeva is the most popular even in the

modern times and has been translated into most of the languages of the world. This flow of Sanskrit literature continued for some tine but dried up in the intolerant atmosphere.



# 21.

## Abhinavagupta is still relevant

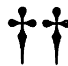
What is the significance of remembering Abinavagupta on a national scale after one thousand years? Abhinavagupta and his *Śaiva* philosophy are just historical facts. What is their relevance in the contemporary times?

History is the memory of a nation or a country. The loss of memories is because the knowledge that has been accumulated by the country through the ages and the talent that makes the country lies beneath the layers of adverse times, in the language of Abhinavagupta, beneath many sheaths (*Kañcuka)*. Abhinavagupta was such a genius philosopher and thinker who through the coordination of various philosophies and methods of meditation put forth a holistic philosophy. Such a philosophy which paved the way for the society to get rid of many ways of extremist thinking which affected the society. Such extremist thinking is still prevalent in our society in one or the other way. The caste system, in the ancient times, may have been developed to run the society efficiently, but it developed into an aimless extremism and divided people into those with higher birth and those with lower birth. Abhinavagupta emphasised the equality of a Brahmin and a *Śūdra* when they are on the path of Śiva. There is no lower and higher birth in the field of devotion. Everyone is equal.

The concept of restraining the sensual urges and

ignoring the material world had blocked the path to reach God for the common people. The dominant idea was that God can be achieved through renunciation only. But Abhinavagupta erased the difference between an ascetic and a householder. He himself remained unmarried like an ascetic but for his devotees he did not keep the obligation of running away from homes for their devotion towards Śiva. He would readily express his disagreement with other masters, but did not believe in the condemnation of the tradition of great masters. In his works he has discussed many such masters. He did not negate the great works but on the basis of his talent gave their novel explanations. Like Kālidāsa he believed that a concept can not be right because of its ancientness, nor can it be abandoned on the basis that it is new. His definitions of ancient thought resulted in new traditions. During Abhinavagupta's times many intellectual and material problems existed. Such problems can be seen in our times as well. So there is nothing amazing about the fact that Abhinavagupta equally is relevant in our times as he was in tenth century.

The relevance of Abhinavagupta vis-ṁ-vis Kashmir is in this respect also that today we need to change the discourse regarding Kashmir. The ancient Kashmir, the land of mother Goddess *Śāradā,* has been such a centre of Indian culture that the vibration have been felt in every nook and corner of our country. This cultural, intellectual and philosophical laboratory has been created through the efforts of the intellectuals and scholars of every corner of our country ranging from Kerala and Karnataka in the south to the valleys of the Ganga and Yamuna in the north and Assam and Bengal in the east. Kashmir the land of Śāradā reciprocated. When Abhinavagupta lays emphasis on *Pratyabhijñā* he talks about the recognition of *Śiva* who dwells in the finite soul *(Jīva)*. He calls it *Īśvarapratyabhijñā* but today we are facing the enormous challenge to recognise this vast nation that dwells in all of us.



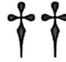
# APPENDIX I

## Abhinavagupta's Works

Today, there are 248 manuscripts of Abhinavagupta's works, available in various libraries, spread all over India. (41 major and minor works - chronologically)

1. Bodhapañcadaśikā
2. Parātriṁśika vivṛtti/vivaraṇa
3. Mālinivijayavārttika
4. Tantrāloka
5. Tantrasāra
6. Tantravaṭadhanikā
7. Dhvanyālokalocana
8. Abhinavabhāratī
9. Bhagavadgītārthasaṁgraha
10. Paramārthasāra
11. Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī (laghvī vimarśinī)
12. Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛttivimarśinī (vṛhati vimarśinī)
13. Kramastotra
14. Dehasthadevatācakrastotra
15. Bhairavastotra
16. Paramārthadvādaśikā
17. Anubhavanivedana
18. Paramārthacarcā
19. Mahopadeśaviśayaṭīkā
20. Anuttaraśatikā/Anuttari
21. Tantroccaya

22. Ghaṭakarparkulakavivṛtti
23. Kramakeli
24. Śivadṛṣṭyālocana
25. Pūrvapañcikā
26. Padārthapraveṣaniraṇaya
27. Prakīrṇakavivaraṇa (commentary on the third *kārikā* of Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya*)
28. Prakaraṇavivaraṇa
29. Kāvyakauṭukavivaraṇa
30. Kathāmukhatilakaṁ
31. Laghvīprakriyā
32. Bhedavādavivaraṇa
33. Devīstotravivaraṇa
34. Tattvādhvaprakāśikā
35. Śiva-Śaktyavinābhāvastotra
36. Bimbapratibimbavāda
37. Paramārthasaṁgraha
38. Anuttaraśataka
39. Prakaraṇastotra
40. Nāṭyalocana
41. Anuttaratattvavimarśinī



## APPENDIX II

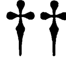
### Śaiva Philosophy in the south

Śiva has been one the *Trideva* right from the Vedic times. He was called Rudra or Śiva. But the concept of Śiva as the supreme God was first promoted by the *Pāśupatas*. *Paśupati* was one of the names of Śiva. They consider man as *Paśu* or the animal and God as *Paśupati* or the master of the herd. There are two books available which describe the path to be taken to reach the ultimate goal, the Śiva. These books are *Gaṇakārikā* and *Pāśupatasūtra*. According to this sect there is Action (*kriyā*) or this universe, the reason (*Kāraṇa*) or the Creator who gave birth to this universe. The third aspect is *Yoga* or the union of man and the God. Fourth stage is *Sādhanā* or the ritual and fifth is the stage of *Duḥkhānta* the end of all the misries. This fivefold process is also reflected in *Śivasiddhānta* .

Although several sects came into existence in south India but *Śaiva* Philosophy was popularized by the local poet saints of southern states in middle ages. These saint poets wrote in Local languages using popular idioms and concepts. *Naynāra Trumūlara* was the most Important saint poet and his book *Tirumantram* is the primary source of *Śivasiddhānta* in south . The poems written by these poets are compiled in to 11 books, Seven the books are equated with the *Āgama* Books, the books believed to be of divine origin like Vedas.

Most important form of *Śaiva* worship in south India is that of *Liṅgāyatas* of Karantka. This form of worship was

initiated by poet saint Basavanna in 11th century. This was also called *Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda*. Śiva and his devote are like friends intimately related with each other. *Liṅgāyatas* call their form of worship as *Vīraśaiva* philosophy. Early scholars of this sect were Reṇukā, Dāruhā, Ghaṇṭakarṇā and Viśvakarṇā. *Liṅgāyatas* always wear a *Liṅgama* so that they remain in constant touch with the Lord.



## APPENDIX III

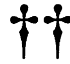
### Swami Lakshman Joo

He was born in a well to do Kashmiri Pundit family, but he was neither interested in the family business nor in the formal university education, some distant goal was beckoning him constantly. Oblivious of surroundings of his classroom he was often found engrossed in deep thoughts. His teacher once asked him what did he see in his thoughts. "greatest of the greats" came the prompt answer. Parents, in the end stopped forcing him to toe the family line and allowed him to go his own way. He went to a remote place called Sadh Malyun, on the banks of a small river Sadhu Ganga, the Ganga of Sadhus. It was in the Handwara district of Kashmir Valley.

His father Narayan Joo, was popularly called Nav Naran, Narayan the Boatman, because he was the first to introduce House boats in the lakes and rivers of Kashmir. He had one son named Maheshwar and he wanted a second male child. But even after eighteen years he could not get his wish fulfilled. He sought the help of his Guru Shree Ramji, who was a devote *Śaiva* scholar. Swami Ram gave him some Prasad for his wife. A son was born in due course. As soon as the child was born Ramji started to dance saying, "I am Ram and my brother Lakshman has arrived." So the child was named Lakshman.

Lakshman Joo like his Great *Guru* Abhinavagupta was an insatiable knowledge seeker. He wondered seeking

Knowledge from many saints and scholars. He stayed for time in the *aśrama* of Gandhiji to understand his views, he went to Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry, and to Raman Maharishi where he got answers to his many questions. He started lecturing on Śaiva philosophy of Abhinavagupta and translated several of his works. The interpretations and translations of Lakshman Joo are so lucid and clear in concepts that his writings became popular in many western countries. Secret Supreme is his most well read book.



# Jammu Kashmir Study Centre
# New Delhi

Jammu Kashmir Study Centre (JKSC) is an organization dedicated to objective research and policy relevant studies on all aspects of the state of Jammu Kashmir. JKSC is committed to conduct studies of historical, legal and social aspects of this strategically important state of India and to disseminate the outcome of the same in right perspective in public domain. JKSC conducts investigations, issues statements and organizes seminars, workshops and orientation programs to highlight the issues related to Jammu Kashmir.

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